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THREE CASES: THE BIRTHRIGHT

BY AGNES JAMES, R.N., AND KATHARINE JAMES

Cincinnati, Ohio

(Continued from page 892 of the August Journal)

Here was a girl, young—like you and me—married, without wooing or contemplation, to a man much older than herself, transported to an old lonely farm to live with him alone, no fun, no clothes, no anything but work. Even if one had been terribly in love, it would have taken lots of ballast. Mind, I liked David Follinsby, and he certainly was one devoted man, but he had no more idea than a jack rabbit that a girl could need anything that he didn't, and Beulah was just plain starved, none of the sex stuff that we got in our lectures, but her emotions were never fed or exercised,—nothing to laugh at or look at or talk about, past or to come, just David for every meal and all night, and he was about as playful as one of his own tractors.

But I worked hard and got the nourishment down her somehow and started a campaign to get her interested. I was nearly delirious with joy when one day I caught her peeking into a fashion magazine I'd brought along, and I was just making fine progress with a discussion on clothes when David tiptoed in and she went flat. The hopelessness came into her face and his matched it, and mine must have been a good third, but I just couldn't give in and my desperation made me bold. He was sitting on the back porch after supper, smoking, while the old woman washed up and Beulah was asleep, so I took the sweater I was knitting and went and sat down on the steps to watch the sunset. Every night he asked me what I thought of her, and listened with his heart in his eyes to every word I said. I don't know how I did it, but all at once I let go and told him exactly what I imagined ailed her. It was a perfectly awful thing to do, when one thinks of it, and if I'd stopped for a minute I'd have been too scared to go on, but I went through to the end. His face was a study.

"I guess you're right, Miss Penley," he said simply, "and I thank you for putting it so plain. Beulah has doubtless missed many things that girls set store by, but if it ain't too late we can mend that."

The worst of my proposition was to come and I could have hugged him for the way he took it.

"You couldn't go away a little while, could you," I stammered, "and just leave her alone with me?"

He never moved an eyelash, just kept his big, sad eyes on my face.

"What you say goes—sure I could. I could go to town a spell—it's nobody's business and Nick can run things."

I tell you he was grand. Next morning he told Beulah he was going to buy some new machinery and might have to be away a week or so. In spite of her apathy her expression changed and he noticed it; also the pink bows I'd put on her hair.

"Miss Penley, you're wonderful!" he said to me when we were alone; "the maid has been deprived of her birthright, but please God I'll make it up to her."

He left me his address and made me promise to write every day.

"You must write to her," I insisted; "it is part of the cure."

"What can I say that she will care to hear?" he asked sadly.

"Look here!" I said severely, "I'll have you on my hands next. Go and see things and don't worry. You write what I tell you to write."

I was joking, but he caught me up and before he left I'd promised to outline his letters to Beulah. When he was dolled up in his Sunday-go-to-meetings and clean shaven, he looked ever so nice and big and strong, and as he drove away the full sense of what I'd taken on myself came over me and I tell you I felt pretty shaky and low spirited, until the first time I heard Beulah laugh right out, then I knew victory was to be mine.

It was the second day and with absolutely nothing to do, I fished out a paper pattern and some goods I've had for years to make "teddies." I spread them on the floor, Beulah watching, and you know just how much good I am with a paper pattern—knowing anatomy doesn't help a bit—but it wasn't till Beulah laughed that I saw what I'd done or what sort of a freak I'd have to be to wear the things I'd cut. I couldn't have planned anything to hit the spot better, and when she made me spread the pieces on the bed to salvage some of it, I wanted to let out a yell of triumph.

I wrote to David that night and told him we were coming along fine, but that we missed him. He stayed away three weeks, bless his heart, and let me tell you I wasn't idle. There was a little two by four town, about five miles from us and I risked my reputation and let "Dundreary" drive me in about twice a week. David had left me oodles of money and there were one or two fair stores. I got some fashion magazines and things for knitting a nice pink scarf, and some nifty little bits of china for Beulah's tray. She was beginning to take notice and I think she was beginning to miss David a little; anyhow, I meant her to.

I didn't want him to write to her till I was sure, but I heard every day or so, blunt, straightforward little letters, brimming with solicitude for us. One morning a parcel came for her and I took it in and opened it. It was the niftiest little vanity bag you ever saw, with all the fixings. Poor kid, she was so tickled the big tears ran down her cheeks as she looked at it, and she kept saying, "My! My! What's got into David?" and she had drunk a big cup of good beef tea before she came to her senses, so to speak.

I thought it was about time to plant a letter from him, so acting on my instructions, along came a wee thing saying that he missed her and that she was to hurry and get well so that he could take her to town to see things with him. It was a trump card that, and stood for quite a decent little piece of steak and a baked potato, and when the next parcel came along I raised her on another pillow to enjoy it better. It was a little dressing jacket this time, pink silk with forget-me-nots the color of her eyes.

Well, why prolong the story? When I saw she began to want him I knew I'd won. But I kept it up till she could sit up in an easy chair. By this time she had three letters that she was pretty scared of losing and one or two presents a week. Her room I couldn't do much about, except a new spread in place of the comfort made of samples of several generations of Follinsby male apparel.

The night he came home I had her all dolled up, looking like a picture, and sitting at the window, her beloved presents all round her. For a minute I was afraid I might not get a word with him alone before she did, and that would have spilled the beans,—so sneaking out, I ran to the end of the lane and waited. My! but he was pleased to be back. I don't suppose I'll ever realize what it meant to him to stay away so long.

"She's grand!" I burst out, "and waiting for you; but don't forget that *you* sent her the presents—don't give me away!"

"What presents?" he said, mystified.

"Oh! go on in. She'll tell you, but keep quiet!"

He strode on and I followed slowly, and just as I got in I heard Beulah telling him he'd chosen exactly what she'd always wanted. When he came out on to the porch he still looked a bit dazed. He was fumbling in his pocket and finally produced a little package which he held out to me. I opened it and found one of those little fancy red plush case effects with needles and thread and a thimble and some strands of colored silk—you know the sort of thing that women never use and men think they do. God knows where he picked it up, but it wasn't a fifty-second cousin to anything in Beulah's assortment and I trembled for my secret.

"It's lovely," I stammered; "she'll be delighted."

His face grew red. "She! Why, Miss Penley, it isn't for Beulah—it's for you."

I was so relieved and touched I was nearly hysterical, and I told him truthfully enough, I'd never had a present that pleased me so much.

"You've taught me a lot," he said soberly, "and I don't expect you'll ever know just how I feel about it, but I want to tell you—you'll be sorely missed when the time comes for you to go."

Mary stopped talking and sipped her tea in silence.

"Well," I said, "I wouldn't mind having a case of sexual starvation, I mean emotional hunger, if you'd put me to bed and bring me round with presents!"

But Mary refused to jest. "Let's go and hear some of those lectures by the big women M.D.'s on 'Catering to the Emotional Life of Women,' I might get a few wrinkles."

"It's probably all you would get," I said, "but I'm game. Only my experience is, that the women who really know are not lecturing, besides the ones I've been nursing were very well catered for, and what I vote is—let's go to a movie."

"All right," said Penny; "the motion is carried."

(To be continued)

HOW MICHIGAN MANAGED ITS STUDENT NURSE CAMPAIGN

BY MAUD McCLASKIE, R.N.

Detroit, Mich.

When the Michigan Hospital Association initiated the campaign to recruit student nurses for the Michigan training schools, last March, it is safe to state that no one concerned had any conception of the interest and the scope of the undertaking. The plan of the campaign may be briefly stated as follows: It was financed by the Hospital Association in the main, though each local committee was asked to bear as much of the local expense as possible. Each hospital in the state belonging to the Association was expected to give one dollar for each hospital bed. Fourteen hospitals financed the undertaking; some did not enter.

A Central Committee was appointed, the chairman of which was the principal of a training school, there were on the committee one